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"THE MUSKINGUM CONSERVANCY DISTRICT"

Broadcast No. 5 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

Between the tumbling hills of the Muskingum Valley winds a network of many rivers...the Walhonding, the Kokosing, the Tuscarawas, the Mohican, the Killbuck, each name recalling the days when Indian tribes lived in the forests that blanketed the rolling hills. But the primitive tribes have long since gone. Forests have been slashed and burned. Steep slopes have been plowed and plowed again. These rivers, once placid, sometimes become roaring threats to a peaceful valley. For, joined together, they may spell--flood!

SOUND: Roaring waters, growing fainter but continuing through following speech...

ANNOUNCER

In March, 1913, the worst flood in the state's history swept across Ohio. Hundreds of lives were lost. Millions of dollars of property was swept away. Bridges, roads, farmlands, homes, all suffered from the churning waters which surged down the state's many rivers. Out of the chaos of flood-wrecked homes and flood-wrecked families grew the demand--something must be done! A flood prevention committee was organized at Dayton. Chairman John H. Patterson told the group:

PATTERSON

Gentlemen, the Miami Valley has suffered a calamity that must not be allowed to occur again. We must find a way out. Dirt must be flying by fall.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

And something was done. A special session of the state legislature passed the Conservancy Act with few dissenting votes. The bill was signed by Governor James M. Cox on March 17, 1914. The Miami Conservancy District was organized. A chain of dams and levees was erected to check the irresponsible waters of southwestern Ohio. For nearly 20 years, now, residents of the Miami Valley have seen those dams keep Ol' Man River away from their door. Meanwhile, in the valley of the Muskingum, men were planning an even more comprehensive flood control plan...men like George H. Maxwell...

MAXWELL

The water must be conserved and controlled where it originally falls. It must be held back on the watershed of every source stream. If this is done, floods will be checked.

FINK

We'll agree to that, Mr. Maxwell. But how? It's a tough problem.

MAXWELL

I'd like to see a model Ohio Valley demonstration established. It could take in, well, the territory making up the entire watershed of the Muskingum River.

FINK

You mean as far north as Lake Erie?

MAXWELL

Perhaps not that far, but at least from Marietta on the south, to Pennsylvania on the east, and north to around Akron and Medina. To the very crest of the watershed.

FINK

I know you've been working for flood control for 30 years, Mr. Maxwell. Is it your plan to stop these floods with retarding reservoirs?

MAXWELL

That's one point in the plan. Reservoirs should be available for water storage when floods come. But it is equally important that we promote underground storage of water.

FINK

I'm not quite sure I follow you.

MAXWELL

The soil is the greatest reservoir in the world, outside of the oceans.

FINK

Oh, yes, I understand that.

MAXWELL

We should provide for the protection of forest and woodland cover on the watershed. That would check, and slow up, the run-off of water. It would prevent erosion. And it would also keep soil out of the river channels.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

Men like George Maxwell, W. O. Littick, Bryce Browning, Ollie Fink, plodded ahead, laying the groundwork for the nation's number one example of flood control based on conservation farming. Dreamers, maybe...but as men dream, so they achieve. For in 1931, in the Zanesville Chamber of Commerce...Bryce Browning spoke:

SOUND: Rapping of gavel, voices gradually quieting...

BROWNING

You know what we're here for. You know what we've got to do. And you know we're going to do it.

SOUND: Voices of agreement.

BROWNING

I'd just like to quote from one of George Maxwell's talks. "Save and use for beneficial purposes the water that now runs to waste in floods, and in that way turn an agency of death and devastation into a blessing and an agency for advancement and wealth production."

SOUND: Voices of agreement.

BROWNING

Here's something else. "The water that ran to waste after the last rain in this part of the country was worth almost its weight in gold, with the silt it carried from your fields downstream headed for the swamps of Louisiana or the Gulf of Mexico."

Ollie, will you read that report?

FINK

All right, Bryce. The object is to bring about the establishment of a Muskingum-Ohio demonstration project--to prevent floods, prevent drought, prevent unemployment, prevent trade depressions and increase trade, commerce---and population...

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

But barriers still blocked the flood control plan. Step by step they had to be removed. And step by step, the leaders also enlisted the aid of the state director of public works, the Public Works Administration, the state highway commission, Army engineers. Finally, in 1933, the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District was officially established. And in January, 1935, on a cold windy day, Governor George White stood before a crowd assembled on the site of the first construction, the Tappan Dam in Harrison County...

SOUND: Cheers and hubbub of crowd...

WHITE

Using a spade isn't new to me. I dug gold in the Klondike once upon a time.

SOUND: Laughter and cheers.

WHITE

Seriously, this is the first actual step in a great flood control set-up that will be of untold benefit to the people of the Muskingum Valley. I regard this as one of the most important acts of my administration.

SOUND: Sound of spade scraping, earth being turned, then loud cheers.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

Today, no finer example of the cooperative enterprise of federal, state, and local agencies exists, than the comprehensive conservation developments in the eight thousand square mile drainage of the Muskingum River. The 14 flood control and water conservation dams are completed, and will soon be ready for operation. Do they work?

BROWNING

The flood control reservoirs have not yet been placed in operation. But, even when partially completed, during the January and June floods of 1937, they demonstrated that they will hold back the floodwaters. Mohawk Dam automatically impounded 51 feet of water. Altogether, I believe the dams were responsible for flood reductions ranging from two to eight feet down the Valley.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

Scattered throughout the Muskingum Conservancy District are four watershed demonstration projects, and numerous other soil conservation demonstrations set up by the CCC and the Soil Conservation Service. Believing that proper land use and common-sense tillage methods not only save soil, but play an important part in flood control, farmers cooperating in these projects are aiding in the battle. Do soil conserving practices really reduce floodwaters?

BROWNING

During the spring rains, farms cultivated on the contour held most of their soil and moisture. One farmer says that his terraced field lost only one-fourth of the soil it did before terracing. Good meadow stands, in which not only the density but the quality of the meadow was high, retarded both soil and water losses.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

And today, men of the Muskingum Valley await floods--not with eagerness, for floods are things of horror--but with confidence and security. For they are prepared. The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District will swing into action in July. And in July, the nation's outstanding example of cooperation between engineering and agriculture will be ready for tests that may come. A new order of conservation is in the making.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

And now, Ewing Jones of the Soil Conservation Service in Dayton. Ewing, it's up to you to carry on from here.

JONES

All right, _____. I'm ready to move right along. The story of the Muskingum Conservancy District is an encouraging one. In Dayton we know what the Miami Conservancy District has done for the Miami Valley, and I imagine folks in the Muskingum Valley are beginning to feel the same way about their District. But that brings us to Bryce Browning. Bryce, who is now secretary-treasurer of the Muskingum group, was one of the spark plugs of the fight to form and complete that district. Let's ask him to come into this discussion. Will you, Bryce?

BROWNING

Gladly, Ewing, if for no other reason than to correct an impression you might have given.

JONES

And what is that?

BROWNING

I believe you have given too much credit to a few people. The success of the Muskingum Conservancy District has depended in the past, and will continue to depend, upon the whole-hearted cooperation given it by the people who live in the Valley.

JONES

Yes, perhaps we didn't bring that out clearly.

BROWNING

It can't be stressed too much. Without their help, and without their confidence, the project would have remained a dream.

JONES

It's a mighty big reality, now, though.

BROWNING

And it's through the help of a number of organizations, too. You said that the Public Works Administration, the state highway department, and the United States Army Engineers had helped. You're familiar with the cooperation given us by the Soil Conservation Service.

JONES

Yes, I am.

BROWNING

There are still other agencies that have helped to make the Valley a better place in which to live. The WPA has provided manpower and funds. The National Youth Administration is helping with reforestation and with the development of park recreational facilities. We are developing a long-time wildlife restoration and propagation program with the help of the Ohio Conservation Division, the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries, and the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

JONES

A fine example of a lot of agencies working together.

BROWNING

There's more to the list. The Geological Survey and the Weather Bureau, the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, the Agricultural Extension Service. I believe that about covers them all.

JONES

All working together. And say, Bryce! That reminds me of that pamphlet you showed me the other day.

BROWNING

The one called: "Working Together in the Muskingum Valley"?

JONES

That's the one. I believe a good many people would be interested in that bulletin. Would you be willing to send copies to those requesting them?

BROWNING

If you'll collect the requests, Ewing.

JONES

I'll be glad to. All right. Listeners, we'll arrange to send a copy of "Working Together in the Muskingum Valley" to anyone writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. But, Bryce--we're getting away from the subject a little. Now that your construction program is completed, I suppose you're prepared to rest on the oars.

BROWNING

Far from it. As long as I have the ability and the opportunity, I'm going to keep on trying to build up the Muskingum district, and part of the building program includes something you're interested in--soil conservation.

JONES

Good! I know you have a large investment in the Conservancy District, and don't want that investment impaired by silting behind the dams.

BROWNING

I should say not. It's highly important to have soil conservation measures on the land above the dams. Soil conservation not only protects agriculture, but keeps soil from piling up behind the dams--And, of course, that cuts down the flood hazard.

JONES

What's to be your first step?

BROWNING

We're adding an agriculturist to our staff, a man who will work closely with the Extension Service and with your organization--the Soil Conservation Service. And, in turn, I'm hoping a soil conservationist will be assigned to the Valley.

JONES

Again, working together. Now, Bryce, I wish you'd stand by for just a minute, while I answer a couple of questions that have come through the mail.

BROWNING

Go right ahead, Ewing.

ANNOUNCER

The question box opens, and here's one from Pendleton county, Kentucky. "In driving through the outer bluegrass hills during a rain, I notice great volumes of water come rushing off hillsides in meadow and pasture. There seems to be a real problem of soil and water conservation on these lands that are devoted to supposedly erosion-controlling crops."

JONES

The answer there, is quality. Good meadows and pastures are indeed excellent erosion-controlling crops, but they must be good. I think you'll find that too many so-called pastures in the outer bluegrass region are really nothing more than exercise fields. They can be improved by liming and fertilizing, by contour furrows, and by rotational grazing--and that includes keeping stock off the pastures in the late fall, winter, and early spring. Sometimes, of course, this excess water comes from cultivated fields above the pastures. In those cases, diversion ditches should usually be constructed above the pastures.

ANNOUNCER

From Shelby county, Indiana. "I seem to lose considerable top-soil from my corn land in the winter and spring. What can I do about it?"

JONES

The answer is, cover up. Keep your cultivated fields under some cover of vegetation as much as possible. You can probably stop most of your losses by following the corn with a cover of wheat or rye. Your county agent can tell you.

Now, Bryce Browning, we were talking about working together. I can think of no more fitting way to end this discussion than by reading the closing summary from your bulletin, "Working Together in the Muskingum Valley." Will you read it?

BROWNING

Certainly. "Residents of the Valley, as well as visitors from outside, should realize that flood control and sustained agriculture are interrelated matters. The larger flood control structures can be made more effective if every farm, and every field in every farm, can be made a natural reservoir for impounding a portion of the rain and snow that falls on it. This purpose can be achieved if nature's original land cover of grass and trees can be simulated. Soil conservation research and farmer experience have shown that such primeval conditions can be simulated on land in cultivation. Proper care of woodlots, strip cropping and terracing in correctly-rotated fields, contour furrows in pastures and proper pasture management, establishment of vegetative cover on unprotected and eroded areas--all these practices applied widely and in connection with the larger structures, science believes, will do the trick. Men of the Muskingum are going to prove it."

MUSIC: Fading...

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Next week: The story of crop rotations and humus.

SOUND: More rain...

ANNOUNCER

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